



# **IGNITE First Year Experience Program:**

Find Your Spark



**On-site Visit: March 13-16, 2023**



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# I. Executive Summary

The UNC Asheville Quality Enhancement Plan (QEP) is titled “IGNITE: Finding Your Spark.” Students participating in IGNITE will build skills and academic confidence while building meaningful connections to the community on and off campus. IGNITE will accomplish this by engaging incoming first year students in a structured, peer-led, cohort experience in which Peer Advising Leaders (PALs) facilitate structured conversations topics such as interpersonal skill development, growth mindset, intercultural dialogue, and introductory career education.

This project is aligned with UNC Asheville’s core values of diversity and inclusion, innovation, and sustainability as well as with key strategic priorities from the institution’s Revitalization Plan, specifically to evolve and innovate institutional culture and student support. The project grew out of broad-based campus concern about alarming declines in first-to-second year student retention at UNC Asheville.

IGNITE will have two different anchor points for each semester of the first year. In the Fall semester, the core element will be peer-led class meetings which guide first year students through a series of sessions focused on helping them “find their spark” and ignite their passion for UNC Asheville and their own growth and development. The IGNITE sessions will be embedded in each First Year Seminar course and introduce students to concepts of leadership development and self-discovery. In the Spring, IGNITE will continue as an optional, peer-led experience, inviting students to participate in a 1 credit hour course to explore and become involved in experiential learning opportunities across campus and in the surrounding community.

Centering peer-to-peer connections and community engagement in our QEP addresses not only the desire for a stronger sense of community expressed by stakeholders across campus, but aligns with the literature on student success as a strategy to increase students’ sense of belonging as well their competence and confidence in navigating their journey at UNC Asheville. Additionally, in increasing our intentional support for peer-to-peer relationships, we will significantly increase and strengthen the rich relationships across campus without significantly increasing workload on a pandemic-strained faculty and staff. And engaging upper-level students in this paid work increases our capacity to offer on-campus employment which literature also shows to have positive retention outcomes for students.



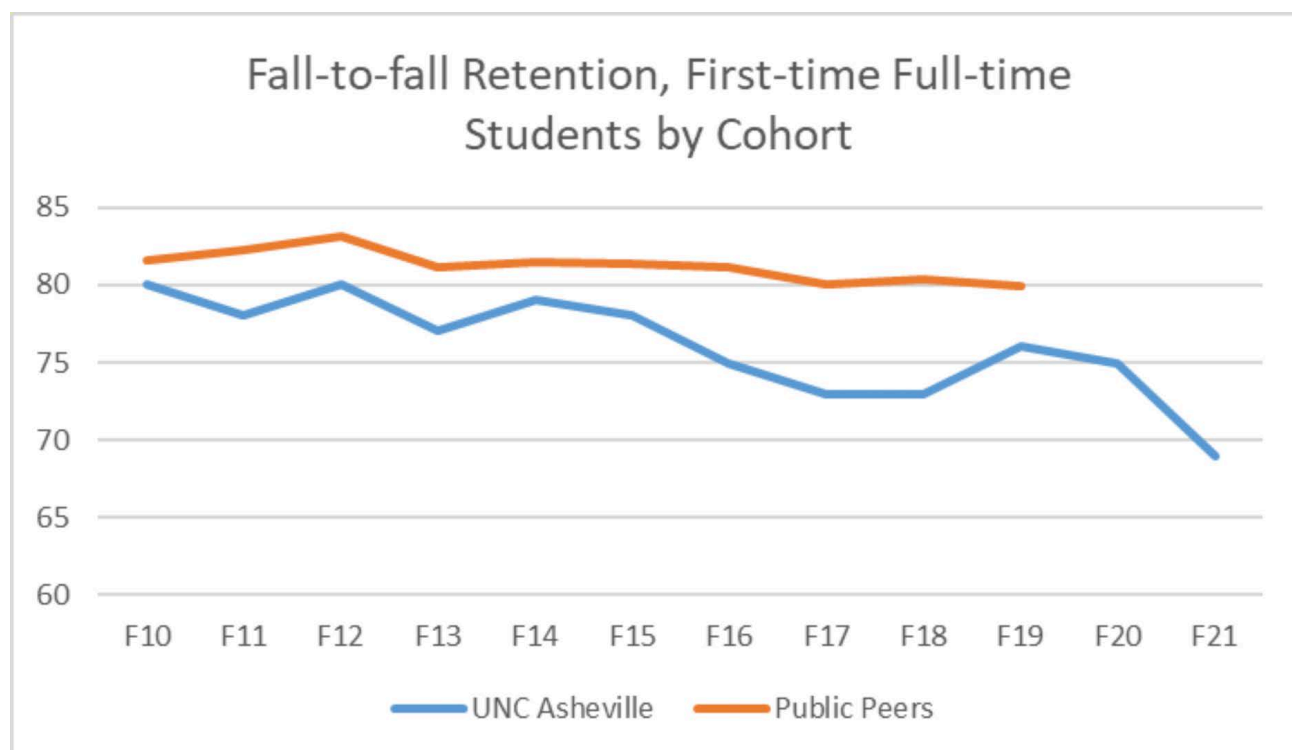
## Topic Selection

Our selection of this topic was based on several factors: alarming declines in enrollment and retention at UNC Asheville, institutional assessment data related to student persistence and engagement, campus-wide planning and strategic priorities of both our institution and the University of North Carolina System, and a series of focus groups and listening sessions conducted with faculty, staff, and students.

**Enrollment and retention data.** From 2010-2016, UNC Asheville's fall enrollment was stable, averaging around 3800, with fall-to-fall (FTF) retention for first-year, full-time students averaging around 80%. Since that time, however, we have experienced a steady enrollment decline, with Fall 2022 headcount at 2914. Although a portion of this decline has been driven by decreases in new student enrollment, student retention is a critical concern for our university. From Fall 2016 to Fall 2020, FTF retention of entering cohorts ranged from 73% to 76%, with retention of the Fall 2021 cohort falling to a low of 68.6%. While some of the Fall 2021 decline can be attributed to the effects of COVID, consistent with national trends, the decrease in Fall 2021 retention at UNC Asheville is larger than others have experienced.

Figure 1 shows our FTF retention rates from Fall 2010 to the present, as compared with public peer institutions. Although data from Fall 2021 for our peers are not yet available, it is nonetheless clear that we are experiencing an especially challenging period with regard to retention.

**Figure 1: Fall-to-Fall Retention, First-time Full-time Students by Cohort**



**Relevant institutional assessments.** UNC Asheville’s Office of Institutional Research, Effectiveness and Planning (IREP) has attempted to learn more about what factors impact students’ decisions to leave or persist. Exit surveys from 2017-2018 and 2018-2019 suggested that the reasons students leave are multifaceted and complex, with students themselves often unclear about their motivations. In the 2019-2020 academic year, a new assessment approach was developed: Rather than surveying only departing students, we decided instead to develop a questionnaire aimed at all enrolled students. Our hope was that we would be able to identify factors or practices affecting student retention so that ultimately changes could be made *before* students opted to exit the university. A review of literature on student retention and of surveys adopted by other COPLAC universities revealed four critical areas of importance to incorporate into our instrument: student-faculty interactions, academic advising, career planning, and sense of belonging. With assistance from campus personnel in both Student Affairs and Academic Affairs, we developed survey questions in each of these areas. The resulting “Continuing Student Survey” (CSS) was tested on multiple platforms and launched in the 2020-2021 academic year (see survey in Appendix A).

The fall 2020 administration of the CSS revealed a large disparity on questions related to sense of belonging between students who persisted at UNC Asheville and those who did not. As indicated in Table 1, students who were retained exceeded exited students on all six sense of belonging scale items. In addition, students who were retained were significantly more likely to have strong self-perceptions of their academic and leadership ability, believe their learning was important to their professors, feel that their professors provided them with positive feedback or reinforcement, feel that their professors worked with them one-on-one when they needed it, have a good relationship with their academic advisor, and interact with their academic advisor more than five times during the semester.

**Table 1: Students Reporting Positively on Sense of Belonging Questions (CSS, 2020)**

Question	% Positive	
	Exited Students	Retained Students
I have at least one close friend at UNCA with whom I can talk about important things	57.7%	78.8%
I have at least one faculty or staff member with whom I can talk about important things	53.9%	69.7%
I feel like I belong at UNCA	38.5%	77.8%
I think of myself as a member of the campus community	26.9%	63.9%
I feel integrated, socially, into campus life	3.8%	51.9%
I feel like I matter at UNCA	42.3%	70.9%

The 2021 CSS findings again showed a large discrepancy in sense of belonging between students who persisted at UNC Asheville and those who did not, with a statistically significant difference between groups evident on every individual sense of belonging item. Other distinguishing factors between the two groups included positive faculty interactions, a student's self-perception of their academic and leadership abilities, a student having a good relationship with their academic advisor, and taking a course taught by their advisor.

In addition to our retention data and CSS findings, a third assessment that has proven relevant to our QEP is the CIRP Freshmen Survey (TFS), conducted through the Higher Education Research Institute (HERI). The TFS is administered to first-year, full-time students during the first two weeks of the semester and assesses students' background characteristics, high school experiences, attitudes, behaviors, and expectations for college.

In Fall 2021, the TFS was administered to all incoming students at UNC Asheville, garnering a 45% response rate. Several important differences between UNC Asheville students and students from a corresponding group of 16 public and private four-year institutions were identified. Related to academic engagement, UNC Asheville students reported spending less time than their peers in high school activities such as studying and doing homework, and they anticipated less involvement in college academic programs such as tutoring, study abroad, or undergraduate research. UNC Asheville students also expected less on-campus social engagement in college than their peers (e.g., joining organizations, participating in student government) but a greater likelihood that they would pursue a job. They also described less academic self-confidence than their peers, and they reported much greater mental health challenges than peers, including past feelings of depression, anxiety, and being overwhelmed. Table 2 provides representative item ratings from the TFS (see Appendix B for the full survey). Taken together, these data suggest that UNC Asheville students could benefit from early, intentional efforts to encourage class and campus involvement.



**Table 2: Comparisons between UNC Asheville and Peer Institution Students on Relevant TFS Items (HERI, 2021)**

Question	UNC Asheville Students	Peer Institution Students
During your last year in high school, how much time did you spend during a typical week on studying/homework? (% “11 to 15 hours”)	7.6%	17.3%
In the past year, how often have you been bored in class? (% “frequently”)	51.4%	40.4%
What is your best guess as to the chances that you will participate in student clubs/groups? (% “very good chance”)	45.2%	68.7%
What is your best guess as to the chances that you will work on a professor’s research project? (% “very good chance”)	15.1%	33.8%
What is your best guess as to the chances that you will get a job to help pay for college expenses? (% “very good chance”)	57.7%	49.1%
How do you rate your academic ability as compared with the average person your age? (% “highest 10%”)	12.7%	24.0%
Rate the extent to which mental health has been a source of stress for you since the start of the COVID-19 pandemic. (% “very large”)	51.3%	33.9%



**Institutional planning and strategic priorities.** Given widespread campus concern about enrollment and retention, former UNC Asheville Chancellor Nancy Cable and former Provost Garakai Campbell began “revitalization” planning in Fall 2019. Following numerous town hall meetings designed to gather input from faculty, staff, students, and alumni, a formal [Revitalization Plan](#) was created and released in 2021. We were able to make use of the feedback and insights gathered during this process in planning our QEP.

As part of the University of North Carolina System of universities, UNC Asheville is careful to align our priorities with System expectations. Student success is one of five goals described in the UNC System [2017-22 Strategic Plan](#), with four-year graduation rates identified as a primary outcome measure of success. Increasing FTF retention is clearly a critical first step in raising overall graduation rates.

Additionally, an external review of the Student Affairs division at UNC Asheville was undertaken in Fall 2021 by two national leaders in Student Affairs: Leo Lambert, former President of Elon University, and Pat Lampkin, former Vice Chancellor of Student Affairs at the University of Virginia. One of the integral messages from their report was that UNC Asheville must broaden its suite of high-impact practices and that excellence in experiential learning should be as integral to UNCA’s identity as its liberal arts mission. Because the first-year student experience is so often identified as a critical aspect of high-impact practices (see literature review), we considered this information as we planned for the focus groups.

Other items considered as we began the process to develop our QEP included discussions and efforts related to academic leadership structural changes, pilots and collaborations in First Year Experience work, and finally, existing investments and initiatives in Civitas and Retention and Student Success. Finally, we wanted to ensure that our ultimate project aligns with UNC Asheville’s [core values of diversity and inclusion, innovation, and sustainability](#).

After diving into each of these sources of information and guiding priorities, we settled on a broadly-focused working title for our QEP, “The new student experience, from admission to completion of the first year at UNC Asheville.” We felt this emphasis was highly consistent with community feedback, would align well with institutional needs, and would provide an opportunity for significant, positive impact on our students.



**Focus groups.** To continue the process of gathering feedback from campus constituent groups and to narrow the specific focus of the working title, in the Spring 2022 semester we facilitated a series of focus groups with faculty, staff, students, and recent graduates. The groups were guided by a set of open-ended questions related to student success in the first year (see description of focus group questions, participation statistics, and format in Appendix C). Focus group participants’ responses were recorded and transcribed, and a qualitative analysis was conducted to identify predominant themes. The most frequent themes associated with each question, along with the percentage of respondents voicing them, are summarized in Table 3.

**Table 3: Predominant Themes from Qualitative Analysis of Recorded Responses in Focus Groups**

<i>What skills, knowledge, or qualities should a student develop during their first year?</i>
Develop academic skills, learn how to use resources (18%)
Build community (with each other and with faculty and staff) (14%)
Develop executive functioning skills and self-efficacy (14%)
Develop resiliency and a passion for perseverance (13%)
<i>If you could suggest the one or two most important things the University could do to improve the experience for a new student here, what would you recommend?</i>
Promote connections, community building, social interactions, and engagement (25%)
Provide tools, skills integration, and substantive experiences (20%)
Revise the First Year Seminar and the First Year Experience (12%)
<i>(Student focus groups only): How would you define student success in the first year?</i>
Build community with each other and connections to campus (39%)
Develop self-advocacy (22%)
Develop life skills (18%)
<i>Feedback from alumni regarding the first year</i>
Orientation and how we envision it is important (27%)
Building connections and community is key (17%)
Faculty and staff retention should be a consideration (17%)

**Listening sessions.** After making decisions regarding our plans for the Fall IGNITE program and after beginning the pilot program for year 0, we held three listening sessions in the Fall 2022 semester to offer the opportunity for faculty, staff, and students to hear our current plans and offer feedback. During these meetings, we presented information about the IGNITE program, the pedagogy behind our philosophy, and the data that influenced us to move towards a peer mentoring program in conjunction with the first year seminars. Very little negative feedback was received and most participants were excited about the direction of the program as planned.

## Literature Review

Undergraduate student retention is a critical measure of the success of an institution in supporting students to successfully earn a college degree. The factors that build student interest and motivation to continue their pursuit in earning an undergraduate degree are multifaceted and include student capacity (capability to learn), self-efficacy (confidence in their ability), interest, and belongingness in the community of learners (Packard, 2016). The UNC Asheville IGNITE Program Quality Enhancement Plan builds upon several of these facets to drive change in institutional culture that will lead to an increase in student retention, especially among our target population of full-time, first-year students.

On-campus engagement, that is, the extent to which students take part in educational experiences, is critically important for student success and retention (Kuh et al., 2006; Tinto, 1997, 2000, 2001). Data from the CIRP Freshman Survey, described in Section II (see Appendix C for full summary), highlighted key characteristics of UNC Asheville students that provided important considerations for the structure of the QEP IGNITE program to meet the needs and expand the capacity of our first-year students. Compared to our peer group of private and public liberal arts institutions, UNC Asheville students are less engaged than their peers and anticipate being less likely to engage in college activities and support services. Yet, the critical elements for success include both the degree of students' time and effort toward their educational experiences in and out of the classroom, and the way these educational experiences are organized and offered by the institution, including curricula and structures to encourage student participation (Kuh et al., 2006). Integrating student support structures into the first-year curriculum addresses these elements.

The CIRP Freshman Survey also indicated that full-time, first-year UNC Asheville students have significantly lower self-efficacy than peer comparison students, as indicated by measures of their self-perceptions of critical thinking, time management, academic ability, drive to achieve, leadership ability, mathematical ability, public speaking ability, and social self-confidence. Peer interactions are known to have a critically important influence in all of these student perceptions (Kuh et al., 2006) and in social integration into the campus community (Tinto, 1997, 2000, 2001). Many peer interactions in undergraduate settings are informal and occur through study groups, participation in social organizations and clubs, peer tutoring, campus jobs, and campus friendships. Yet, more structured peer-led interactions, such as peer tutoring and peer teaching, are just as impactful (Colver & Fry, 2015; Boud et al., 2013). The IGNITE Program is based on peer-led engagement of small cohorts of first-year students.

Engagement in high-impact practices is also a marker of individual well-being and career engagement long after graduation. According to a 2014 Gallup survey of 30,000 US college graduates, there is a strong positive correlation between individual well-being and career engagement; 72% of graduates who are thriving in all areas of well-being are also engaged in their work (Gallup-Purdue, 2014). And if students experienced six specific high-impact activities as an undergraduate, they were three times more likely to be engaged in their careers and over two times more likely to be thriving in all areas of well-being, regardless of race, ethnicity, or first-generation status. These high-impact activities included (1) feeling supported by professors who care, (2) professors who made them excited about learning, (3) professors who encouraged their dreams, (4) a meaningful internship or job, (5) work on a long-term project, and (6) involvement in extracurricular activities (Gallup-Purdue, 2014). The first three are directly related to student-faculty interactions that occur through classes and faculty advising and mentoring. The last three are directly related to engagement on campus such as student leadership, undergraduate research, and service learning projects. Getting students more involved on campus during their undergraduate experience has a significant, ongoing impact in their lives and livelihood beyond their college years.

A student's sense of belonging is the degree to which they feel included, accepted, and valued in their campus community (Bentrim & Henning, 2022). It is also manifested in their feelings of connection to their campus and the people in their campus community (Gillen-O'Neel, 2021). Similar to the statistically significant correlation between sense of belonging measures and student retention measured for UNC Asheville students detailed in Section II, sense of belonging is broadly known to be a contributing indicator of student retention across undergraduate institutions (Bentrim & Henning, 2022; Hausmann et al., 2009). In addition, sense of belonging is linked to student self efficacy (Kuh et al., 2006), and the relationship between a student's sense of belonging and degree of engagement is strongly related (Strayhorn, 2018), even at the level of their sense of belonging and engagement on a particular day (Gillen-O'Neel, 2021). Therefore, developing student sense of belonging is a key theme that links multiple components of the design, implementation, and assessment of UNC Asheville's IGNITE Program.

The IGNITE Program QEP addresses these critical areas (developing self-efficacy, on-campus engagement, and belongingness) through a theoretical model of leadership development developed by UNC Asheville's Leadership Education and Development Program. This program has adopted a multi-faceted definition of leadership, adapted from the Social Change Model (Komives et al., 2017) that undergirds all elements of program development to engage students, which was adapted from the Social Change Model:

*Leadership is socially responsible*  
*Leadership is collaborative and relationship-driven*  
*Leadership is service-oriented*  
*Leadership is a process, not a position*  
*Leadership is inclusive and accessible to everyone*  
*Leadership is values-based*

These elements of student leadership are cultivated through a Leadership Development Framework, depicted in Figure 2, with four concentric circles identifying the four programming stages that guide students in their leadership journey. The framework begins at *discovering self*, which is the focus of the fall-semester programming of the IGNITE QEP for all first-semester students. The scaffolding builds to the next layer, *engaging others*, in the second semester of the QEP, which focuses on multiple types of engagement in our campus community. These foundational elements of the framework prepare students for the next two stages of leadership development: *leading organization* and *cultivating equity and inclusion*. Students will be able to explore and engage with these topics over the remaining course of their academic journey.

**Figure 2: UNC Asheville Leadership Development Framework**

## Leadership Development Framework



The IGNITE program will guide first year students through a structured, cohort experience led by Peer Advising Leaders (PALs), upperclass students with strong leadership qualities and interpersonal skills. PALs will facilitate a series of conversations focused on helping students “find their spark” and ignite their passion for UNC Asheville and their own growth and development. These IGNITE sessions will be embedded in each First Year Seminar course and introduce students to concepts of leadership development and self-discovery through discussions of topics related to value clarification, authentic relationship building, intellectual curiosity, career exploration, empathy and perspective-taking, diversity, equity, and inclusion, and becoming a change agent (see Section V for full implementation plan).

First year students commonly searching for guidance and direction are in more need of support in developing academic confidence and in strengthening their social skills, especially in the aftermath of COVID-interrupted/impacted high school experiences which increased student disengagement in the classroom and beyond (Mintz, 2022; Koenig, 2022). Providing them the opportunity to work closely and continuously with a veteran peer on issues such as development of interpersonal skills will improve their self-efficacy and lead to successful academic outcomes (Packard, 2016; Jacobi, 1991).

Throughout their entire first year, students will be guided through the creation of artifacts and reflections related to their short-term and long-term goals as well as their skill development and connected experiences. They will be supported in recording and displaying these artifacts with an ePortfolio, which will allow them to make meaning of their curricular and extracurricular activities. Documenting these artifacts will also increase their ability to make connections between their classroom experiences and long-term goals, and will provide them with a means of demonstrating their skill sets to potential employers. Engaging in regular reflections about experiences inside and outside of the classroom will build students’ confidence in their learning (Stefano et al., 2016) and has the potential to increase their academic confidence overall.

Centering peer-to-peer connections in our QEP addresses the desire for a stronger sense of community identified as an important goal by stakeholders across campus during our listening sessions. In addition, based on the literature on student success, these relationships will also allow us to increase students’ sense of belonging as well as their competence and confidence in navigating their journey at UNC Asheville (Yomtov et al., 2017). Research also shows that students in these kinds of learning communities persist at a higher rate than comparable students not in learning communities, and they report an increased responsibility to participate in the learning experience (Tinto, 1997; 2000; Tinto et al., 2001; Landis et al., 1998; Driscoll et. al, 2010). This is especially important for first-generation students (Ward et al., 2012), who make up approximately 20% of our students each academic year.

Additionally, in increasing our intentional support for peer-to-peer relationships, we will significantly increase and strengthen relationships across campus without dramatically increasing workload on a pandemic-strained faculty and staff. In their 2020 book, *Relationship-Rich Education*, Peter Felten and Leo Lambert stress the importance of wide, nuanced, and fine-meshed support networks for students. They emphasize that “[t]he classroom remains the most important place on campus for meaningful relationships to take root” (p. 152). Embedding PALs into the First Year Seminars honors the classroom as a critical space for developing community and connection with their FYS seminar instructor, fellow students, and a peer-leader. This framework also acknowledges that we need to involve as many people as possible in the goal of deepening relationships. By creating opportunities for strengthening social skills within the classroom, students can feel empowered to apply these skills outside of the classroom.

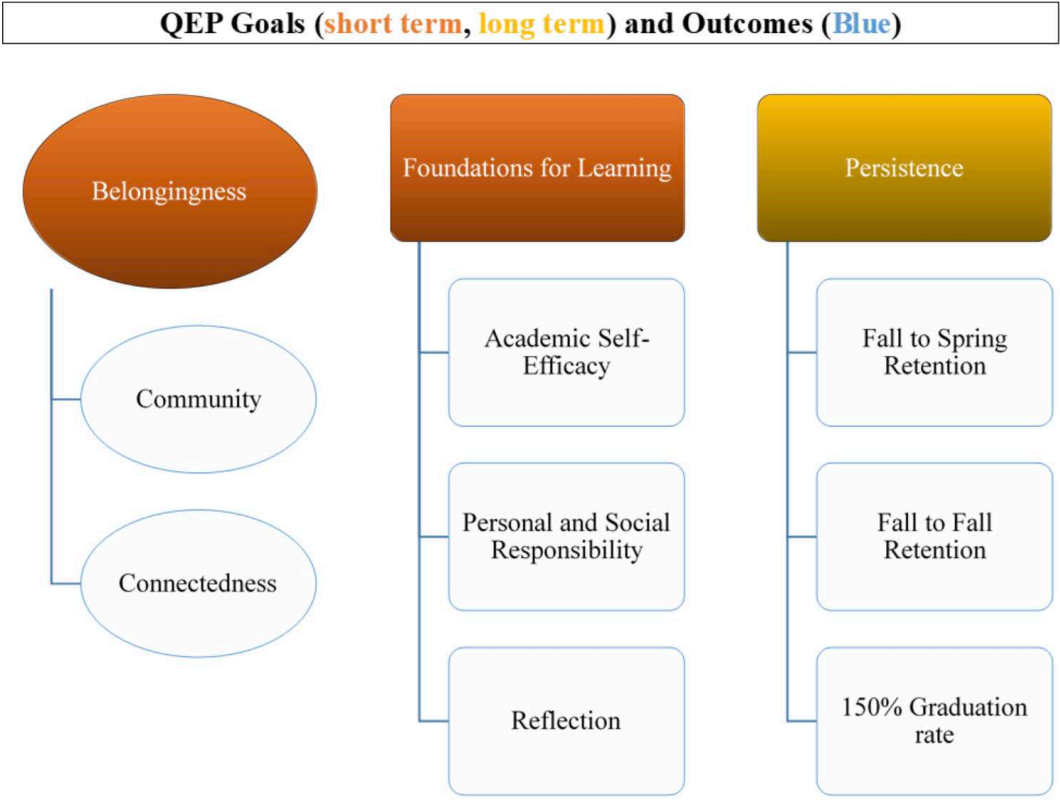
Further, we believe that the potential impact of this program on the PALs themselves will be significant. PALs will receive regular training on delivering the IGNITE curriculum, which will provide them the opportunity to develop leadership competencies related to communication, planning, teamwork and collaboration, critical thinking, equity, consulting, and interpersonal skills, all while becoming actively engaged in working with first year students. This opportunity also increases UNC Asheville’s capacity to offer on-campus employment, as PALs will be compensated for their work. PALs will create a transformational experience for new students and facilitate community-building and belonging for the entire campus community. Research has shown that “[w]orking alongside a cohort of peers or other professionals who directly contribute to the mission and success of an institution can help build a student’s sense of identity, connection, and value to the campus.” (Burnside et al., 2019) Furthermore, [i]n a time of competing priorities and responsibilities, students also benefit from the time saved and the convenience of working near their academic resources, housing, and cocurricular activities” (Cheng & Alcantara, 2004).

Finally, we note that our project addresses many of the “hard truths” about the current state of higher education described in a recent essay in *Inside Higher Ed* (Mintz, 2023). It aims to build the rich relationships noted to be lacking in the lives of most undergraduates; it ensures that first-year seminar classrooms will be student- rather than instructor-centered; it aligns academic learning with a breadth of life skills that are rarely taught explicitly and intentionally in university education; and it directs significant funding toward “the supportive college education that they [contemporary university students] need.”

# Student Outcomes and Evaluation Plan

The UNC Asheville QEP is designed to impact three overarching goals: Belongingness, Foundations for Learning, and Persistence. Positively impacting Belongingness and Foundations for Learning are short-term (proximal) goals, and increasing Persistence is a long-term (distal) goal. The IGNITE program is likely to have an immediate and significant impact on Belongingness and Foundations for Learning because the IGNITE sessions have been designed to support these goals, affording students opportunities to get to know themselves, each other, and the University. Our theory of change assumes that change in Persistence will take more time to observe, and therefore we plan to begin measuring change in this goal during Year 2 of the QEP. Associated with each of these goals are discrete, measurable outcomes (see Figure 3).

Figure 3: QEP Goals and Outcomes



Each of the IGNITE sessions has been designed to include outcomes and objectives supporting these three main goals. IGNITE students will increase self-awareness through the exploration of values, beliefs, and identity. They will also develop greater understanding and appreciation of others through topics related to diversity, equity, and inclusion. The sessions are designed to strengthen interpersonal skills and help students develop the confidence to interact with new people, especially those who are different from themselves. The highest level student outcome for IGNITE is to understand one’s role and responsibilities within the larger community to become a change agent in the future. Additionally, students will learn about UNC Asheville’s academic resources, campus traditions, and opportunities to engage in high impact practices.

## Measurements

***Belongingness.*** Students' sense of Belonging will be measured using three self-report surveys: the Continuing Student Survey (CSS) Belongingness Scale; items from the UNC Asheville Chemistry Scholars survey, an instrument that has been used in the Chemistry department for several years; and two subscales from the Hello Insight measure of social emotional learning (SEL).

### *Continuing Student Survey, Belongingness Scale*

The CSS was developed to provide a comprehensive look at why students were leaving UNC Asheville and to better understand the characteristics, behaviors, and attitudes of those students who do persist. As described in Section II, survey items were based on a literature review of best practices and examination of instruments in use at other COPLAC institutions. Belongingness emerged as a significant discriminator between students who stayed vs. left UNC Asheville. The six items on this scale (see Table 1; see Appendix A for full measure) are rated according to students' level of agreement vs. disagreement (1 = strongly agree, 4 = strongly disagree).

### *Chemistry Department Survey Questions*

Emotional engagement measures of the Chemistry Scholars Program include student perception surveys validated in the literature linked to motivation in the academic major (the MUSIC Model of Academic Motivation Inventory; Jones 2009) and students' level of agreement for questions related to sense of belonging to the academic major and to the university (Goodenow 1993). Students are asked to rank the degree to which they agree with the following survey questions using a 6-point likert scale ranging from 1=Strongly Disagree to 6=Strongly Agree for both measures:

University items:

Sometimes I feel like I don't belong here.

I wish I were at a different college.

Academic major items:

I feel like a real part of the XX major at UNC Asheville.

I feel proud of belonging to the XX major at UNC Asheville.

This survey will be used with all students regardless of major.



### *Hello Insight, Promoting Peer Bonding and Engaging Authentically Scales*

Hello Insight is an online platform that evaluates SEL outcomes in youth development organizations. Two factor scales from the Hello Insight post test will be utilized in the QEP assessment: Promoting Peer Bonding and Engaging Authentically. Both of these factors have been shown to have good reliability ( $\alpha=0.79$  and  $\alpha=0.86$ , respectively). According to Hello Insight (2023), Promoting Peer Bonding is “a young person’s experience with an adult who helps them work with peers in teams and groups, creating a safe space to learn with and from one another, exploring similarities and differences, and developing deep bonds and relationships” (Hello Insight, 2023). Engaging Authentically is defined as “a young person’s experience with an adult who takes the time to get to know them by listening and understanding who they are — their cultural and lived experiences, their interests, and their passions.” Both of these factors support students’ sense of community and connectedness. See Appendices D and E for the full Hello Insight pre and post surveys.

***Foundations for learning.*** Foundations for learning will be measured using one self-report instrument (from Hello Insight), and two observational measures (AAC&U VALUE Global Learning Rubric and AAC&U VALUE Foundations for Learning Rubric).

### *Hello Insight, Academic Self-Efficacy Scale*

Social emotional learning has been shown to promote several long-term outcomes, including academic self-efficacy, which in turn is associated with academic success (e.g., Kanopka, Claro, Loeb, West, & Fricke, 2020). We will assess Academic Self Efficacy, defined by Hello Insight as “a young person’s motivation and perceived mastery over their own learning, school performance, and potential to attain academic success.” This measure has good reliability,  $\alpha=0.78$ . Students will complete both pre and post tests of Hello Insight (see Appendices D and E for full measures)..

### *Personal and Social Responsibility*

According to the Global Learning VALUE Rubric (AAC&U, 2014), personal and social responsibility is defined as “the ability to recognize one’s responsibilities to society—locally, nationally, and globally—and to develop a perspective on ethical and power relations both across the globe and within individual societies. This requires developing competence in ethical and moral reasoning and action.” The Institutional Effectiveness Committee of the faculty at UNC Asheville will use this rubric to evaluate student artifacts from their ePortfolio.



## Reflection

According to the Foundations for Learning VALUE Rubric (AAC&U, 2009), “reflections tell what students think or feel or perceive. Reflection provides the evaluator with a much better understanding of who students are because, through reflection, students share how they feel about or make sense of their learning experiences. Reflection allows analysis and interpretation of the work samples or collections of work for the reader. Reflection also allows exploration of alternatives, the consideration of future plans, and provides evidence related to student growth and development. Perhaps the best fit for this rubric are those assignments that prompt the integration of experience beyond the classroom.” The Institutional Effectiveness Committee of the faculty at UNC Asheville will use this rubric to evaluate the PAL reflection journals.

## Persistence

Persistence will be measured using standard metrics provided annually to IPEDS and SACSCOC: Fall to Spring retention, Fall to Fall retention, and 150% graduation rate.

## Evaluation Schedule

**Table 4: Schedule of Assessment**

Semester	Hello Insight (pre & post)	GL VALUE	FL VALUE	Returning Student Survey	Chem. Dept Survey	Fall to Spring Retention	Fall to Fall Retention	150% Graduation Rate
Fall 2022	✓							
Spring 2023	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓			
Fall 2023	✓	✓	✓					
Spring 2024	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓			
Fall 2024	✓	✓	✓					
Spring 2025	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓

\* GL VALUE = Global Learning Value Rubric

\* FL VALUE = Foundations of Learning Value Rubric

\*\* Assessment schedule will follow the same pattern as the Fall 2024-Spring 2025 school year for all remaining years of the 5-year project

## Implementation Plan

The IGNITE program will be based on a theoretical framework adapted from the Social Change Model of Leadership Development (Komives et al., 2017) that focuses on self-discovery, self in relationship, self in community, and cultivating equity and inclusion. The IGNITE curriculum will be primarily led and facilitated by Peer Advising Leaders (PALs). PALs will be upperclassmen selected in the Spring semester to fulfill their roles in the subsequent academic year. The PAL selection process will include an application with short essay questions, followed by an interview with professional staff members. PALs must have at least a 2.5 GPA, demonstrated leadership potential, a commitment to equity and inclusion, strong communication and interpersonal skills, and a desire to create positive change at UNC Asheville. PALs will receive ongoing training and leadership development throughout the program in order to best support first year students. This will include a three-day retreat at the beginning of August to receive training on program goals, leadership development theory, group development, facilitation, and pedagogical approaches to peer education. Following the retreat, PALs will receive continued training, support, and professional development during the academic year through a bi-weekly course entitled *Applied Leadership Development*.

**Fall Semester: *Finding your Spark*.** The Fall semester will support the transition of first year students by helping them develop personal skills and confidence to be successful at UNC Asheville. PALs will initially meet their cohort of students at the end of EmBark, UNC Asheville's first year student orientation. First year students are grouped by IGNITE/First Year Seminar cohorts throughout EmBark, allowing for relationship-building and connection from the first day they set foot on campus. At the final orientation session, EmBark Orientation Mentors introduce the cohorts to their PAL, creating a seamless handoff from one student leader to the other for the duration of the fall semester. The PALs will then facilitate the first session of IGNITE entitled "Finding Your Spark," which invites students to start identifying a passion area and set intentions for their time at UNC Asheville. This first meeting will also provide an opportunity for PALs to introduce IGNITE and explain what first year students can expect from the program throughout the year.

The IGNITE curriculum is intentionally designed to facilitate community-building among first year students with specific student learning outcomes and instructional scaffolding to meet those outcomes (see Table 5 below). This will be achieved through self-reflective journal prompts, personal assessments, videos and other multimedia, "think, pair, share" activities, small group work, and inviting students to integrate what they have learned into their day-to-day life.



**Table 5: *IGNITE Fall Semester Curriculum Map***

Session Theme	Overview
<b>Session 1: Finding Your Spark</b>	Students identify 1-2 interest/passion areas they would like to explore during their time at UNC Asheville and discuss their individual hopes and fears for their college experience.
<b>Session 2: Identity - Who Am I?</b>	Students express feelings around pivotal life experiences and create personal Wandering Maps that visually represent their understanding of self.
<b>Session 3: Values Exploration</b>	Students articulate their personal values and describe how those values align with their daily actions and behaviors.
<b>Session 4: Inclusion and Belonging</b>	Students explore key concepts related to diversity, equity, and belonging and reflect on how they can cultivate a culture of belongingness at UNC Asheville.
<b>Session 5: Building Authentic Relationships</b>	Students reflect on what characteristics define authentic relationships and what they want out of relationships during their time at UNC Asheville.
<b>Session 6: Effective Communication</b>	Students articulate effective communication as a process of understanding and shared meaning and apply effective communication skills through group scenarios.
<b>Session 7: Learning from Failure</b>	Students understand the difference between a fixed and growth mindset and start to remove the stigma from failure and mistakes.
<b>Session 8: Skills and Interests</b>	Students identify skills they want to gain and strengthen through opportunities during their time at UNC Asheville.
<b>Session 9: Becoming a Change Agent</b>	Students reflect on what they want their UNCA legacy to be and identify examples of campus resources to support them in the future.

Spring Semester: Exploring Experiential Learning Pathways. Once students have identified their “spark” during the Fall semester, they will transition to exploring experiential learning pathways in the Spring semester. The purpose of the experiential learning pathways is for students to deepen their connections with others on and off campus and to reflect upon how they will become a change agent at UNC Asheville and beyond.

Starting in the Spring semester, the QEP will transition from a mandatory engagement to an optional experience. Students will be invited and encouraged to enroll in a 1-credit hour course that will focus on experiential learning and critical reflection, moving IGNITE from *self discovery* in the fall semester to *self in community* in the spring. Experiential learning pathways will include partnerships with the following offices and departments:

- Career Center
- Undergraduate Research
- Study Abroad
- Student Life and Engagement
- Key Center for Community Engaged Learning.

Guided by a Peer Advising Leader and an academically-qualified faculty instructor of record, first-year students will increase their understanding of the available experiential learning options and what each of them entails. They will integrate those options relevant to them into the 4-year plan they started to develop in the Fall semester and plan for implementing at least one of those options during their Sophomore year.

We anticipate offering ten course sections beginning in Year 1 that can accommodate up to 180 first year students. This opportunity for first year students to continue in the spring IGNITE program will be promoted in Fall First-Year Seminar courses and through their advising sessions with Student Success Specialists. Over the course of the QEP, we hope to increase the Spring IGNITE sections by two courses each academic year to account for greater student interest based on a campus culture shift.



PALs who are hired to facilitate the fall IGNITE curriculum will have the opportunity, pending a positive mid-semester evaluation, to continue in their positions the subsequent spring semester. To prepare PALs for this additional responsibility, programmatic staff will facilitate a “Reflect and Refresh” professional development training day in early January to review the experiential learning pathways schedule and facilitation guide for spring semester. PALs will continue to have bi-weekly check-ins with program staff throughout spring semester to ensure that they feel supported and are set up for success.

First year students will engage in the experiential learning pathways bi-weekly. On the “off” weeks, using the Kolb Theory of Experiential Learning, PALs will meet with their cohorts and lead first year students in critical reflection around questions including:

- *What* did you learn about yourself, your leadership style, and/or how you engage with others?
- *Why* is this important to your college experience?
- *What’s next?* How can you apply this knowledge to the rest of your time at UNC Asheville?

Centering peer-to-peer connections and community engagement in our QEP addresses not only the desire for a stronger sense of community expressed by stakeholders across campus, but based on the literature on student success, will also allow us to increase students’ sense of belonging as well their competence and confidence in navigating their journey at UNCA. Additionally, in increasing our intentional support for peer-to-peer relationships, we will significantly increase and strengthen the rich relationships across campus without dramatically increasing workload on a pandemic-strained faculty and staff. And finally, engaging upper-level students in this paid work increases our capacity to offer on-campus employment which literature also shows to have positive outcomes for students.

UNC Asheville has developed a 5-year plan for implementation and assessment, with a pilot of the IGNITE program scheduled for Fall 2022 (Year Zero). Table 4 in Section IV above details the evaluation plan for each year of the project. Given the 5-year framework, we will be able to track the first two cohorts over their entire time at UNCA and also assess the impact on the PALs.



## Leadership Structure

The leadership team for the QEP will report to the Interim Vice Chancellor for Academic Affairs, Dr. Herman Holt, and the Vice Chancellor for Student Affairs, Dr. Meghan Harte Weyant. Additionally, the Vice Chancellor for Academic Affairs has designated an interim vice provost, Dr. Melissa Himelein, to serve as the liaison between the Vice Chancellor and the QEP Co-Directors. Dr. Himelein, previously the Director of UNC Asheville's Center for Teaching and Learning, was deeply involved in our first QEP and will be able to provide insight and continuity as we initiate the project.

**QEP Co-Directors.** Based on feedback from our previous QEP, the decision was made to have two QEP Co-Directors, one representing Student Affairs (i.e., a staff member) and one representing Academic Affairs (i.e., a faculty member). Because the success of this QEP requires the coordination of both Student and Academic Affairs, the Co-Director model is appropriate and will hopefully mean that this project is led in a more efficient and effective manner.

The Co-Director from Student Affairs is Alex Hollified. Alex is the Associate Director of Leadership Education and Development. She oversees the IGNITE First Year Experience Program, Leadership Scholars Program, and Leadership Speaker Series. Previously, she worked in Student Affairs at the Vanderbilt University Women's Center where she developed and led programming on sexual violence prevention, leadership development, and the first year experience. Alex holds a Bachelor's degree in Women's and Gender Studies and Political Science from Wake Forest University and a Master's degree in Community Development and Action from Vanderbilt University's Peabody College.

The Co-Director from Academic Affairs is Dr. Caitlin Brez. Caitlin Brez is an assistant professor in the Department of Psychology. She studies cognitive development, but has also done research in the domain of student success and helped to create interventions to improve student success outcomes. Additionally, she has taught First Year Seminars at UNC Asheville and is familiar with the goals and missions of the first year seminar as part of students' transition to UNC Asheville.

Together, Alex Hollifield and Caitlin Brez will be responsible for the leadership of other members of the QEP leadership team including the QEP Advisory Committee, an Administrative Assistant, and the Assessment Committee. They will also be responsible for the implementation of the QEP and interacting with all community partners involved in this project, including PALs, First Year Seminar instructors, the Career Center, Key Center, and many others. They will be responsible for making sure the QEP is implemented in line with the expectations of SACSCOC. They will also be responsible for managing the budget. While there will be shared responsibilities between Alex and Caitlin, Alex will largely be responsible for tasks that require involvement of student affairs, such as recruiting and training PALs, and Caitlin will be mostly responsible for tasks involving academic affairs, such as training First Year Seminar instructors.

**QEP Advisory Committee.** In planning for the QEP, a working committee was established in 2022 with various representatives from across campus to help develop the QEP. The committee met regularly through 2022 and sought feedback from the campus community as they developed the project. As we move from a planning phase to an implementation phase, the working committee will end and a QEP Advisory Committee will begin. The QEP Advisory Committee will work in conjunction with the Co-Directors to review the QEP, monitor progress, and suggest changes to the QEP. Together with the Vice Chancellor of Academic Affairs and the Vice Chancellor for Student Affairs, the Co-Directors will place a call to the campus community for members of the QEP Advisory Committee. While some members of the working committee may choose to continue to serve on the QEP Advisory Committee, it is expected that new members from the campus community will also be involved. We expect to have a committee that is diverse and representative of our campus community including Student Affairs, Academic Affairs, and the Academic Success Center. The QEP Advisory Committee will initially meet on a weekly basis, moving to bi-weekly after the launch of IGNITE in Fall 2023.

**QEP Administrative Assistant.** To assist with administrative tasks associated with the QEP, a part-time administrative assistant will be hired for the duration of the project. The hope is to hire someone and have them onboard during the Spring 2023 semester. The administrative assistant will report to the Co-Directors and will handle tasks such as payment for PALs, processing invoices, reimbursement for faculty training, assistance with newsletters, and coordination of meetings and retreats.

**QEP Assessment Committee.** Dr. Brad Faircloth will lead the assessment committee for the QEP. Dr. Faircloth is an Assistant Professor in the Psychology Department, as well as UNC Asheville's Program Assessment Coordinator. In this role, he collaborates with academic programs, including the QEP leadership team, in their assessment of student learning. Dr. Faircloth brings experience in institutional effectiveness, accreditation support, and program assessment from other institutions and has been instrumental in supporting UNC Asheville's reaffirmation of accreditation efforts. In his program assessment role, Dr. Faircloth reports to Allie Ellenbogen, Associate Director of Institutional Effectiveness.

UNC Asheville has a standing committee of the Faculty Senate that is responsible for overseeing institutional assessment (the Faculty Senate Institutional Effectiveness Committee). This committee will work with Brad and the assessment team to conduct all assessments for the QEP. This will require coordination with the Office of Institutional Research, Effectiveness, and Planning. Brad Faircloth will serve as a liaison between the QEP Co-Directors, the Institutional Effectiveness Committee of the Faculty Senate and the Office of Institutional Research, Effectiveness, and Planning.

## VII. Budget

In order for our QEP to succeed in creating a transformational first-year student experience, it must be structured yet nimble enough to meet the goals and outcomes of our plan. A six-year budget was created - starting with the 2022-2023 pilot year (Year 0) - through a collaborative process involving key university administrators, community partners, and QEP Advisory Committee members. Consideration was given to every aspect of the plan to ensure the QEP would be financially sustainable over the next five years.

The QEP budget (Table 6) represents UNC Asheville's commitment to enhancing students' first-year experience as outlined in our QEP goals and assessment plan. The budget is designed to address four primary fiscal areas: 1) IGNITE Program Development and Implementation, 2) Administrative Expenses, 3) Personnel Expenses, and 4) Marketing and Outreach Initiatives.

During the 2022-2023 academic year (Year 0), a baseline budget was established to support the successful implementation of the IGNITE Program. Approximately half of incoming first-year students participated in the IGNITE Program in Fall 2022. Beginning in Year 1, all first-year students will engage in the IGNITE Program and will be supported by a Peer Advising Leader (PAL). As indicated in Table 6, the budget allows for smooth scalability and implementation of the IGNITE Program development and implementation, and accounts for anticipated student enrollment increases over the next five years. Importantly, a large portion of the QEP budget is allocated for student stipends for our Peer Advising Leaders (PALs), thus further supporting UNC Asheville's commitment to student leadership education and development.

Additionally, the budget reflects personnel and administrative expenses needed to support the infrastructure of our plan including stipends for our QEP Co-Directors and faculty/staff stipends to successfully implement the IGNITE Experiential Learning Pathways in the Spring semester. Administrative expenses such as assessment and ePortfolio softwares are also included in the budget. Finally, a portion of the budget is allocated for marketing and outreach initiatives to ensure the QEP remains top-of-mind and integrated into UNC Asheville's campus culture in years to come.



## Table 6: IGNITE QEP Six-Year Budget

UNC Asheville QEP Six-Year Budget Plan						
	Year 0 (baseline)	Year 1	Year 2	Year 3	Year 4	Year 5
<b>FYS Sections</b>	24	35	37	39	41	43
<b>IGNITE Program Development &amp; Implementation</b>	<b>2022-2023</b>	<b>2023-2024</b>	<b>2024-2025</b>	<b>2025-2026</b>	<b>2026-2027</b>	<b>2027-2028</b>
Peer Advising Leaders (PAL) Fall Stipends (\$1,200)	\$28,800	\$42,000	\$44,400	\$46,800	\$49,200	\$51,600
PAL Spring Stipends (\$1,200 for 75% participation)		\$31,500	\$33,300	\$35,100	\$36,900	\$38,700
Student LEAD Coordinators (\$6,000 per Coordinator)	\$12,000	\$24,000	\$24,000	\$24,000	\$24,000	\$24,000
Program Materials & Training Expenses	\$10,000	\$25,000	\$25,000	\$25,000	\$25,000	\$25,000
PAL Meal Stipends (\$75 per PAL per semester)	\$3,600	\$5,250	\$6,900	\$7,200	\$7,500	\$7,800
IGNITE Pathways spring activities	\$0	\$17,500	\$18,500	\$19,500	\$20,500	\$21,500
<b>Annual Costs</b>	<b>\$54,400</b>	<b>\$145,250</b>	<b>\$152,100</b>	<b>\$157,600</b>	<b>\$163,100</b>	<b>\$168,600</b>
<b>Administrative Expenses</b>	<b>2022-2023</b>	<b>2023-2024</b>	<b>2024-2025</b>	<b>2025-2026</b>	<b>2026-2027</b>	<b>2027-2028</b>
Assessment Software / Instruments	\$5,000	\$5,000	\$5,000	\$5,000	\$5,000	\$5,000
ePortfolio Software	\$6,000	\$6,000	\$6,000	\$6,000	\$6,000	\$6,000
Professional Development / Conference Travel		\$20,000	\$20,000	\$20,000	\$20,000	\$20,000
Recognition	\$2,000	\$2,000	\$2,000	\$2,000	\$2,000	\$2,000
Catering	\$1,500	\$3,000	\$3,000	\$3,000	\$3,000	\$3,000
<b>Annual Costs</b>	<b>\$14,500</b>	<b>\$36,000</b>	<b>\$36,000</b>	<b>\$36,000</b>	<b>\$36,000</b>	<b>\$36,000</b>
<b>Personnel Expenses</b>	<b>2022-2023</b>	<b>2023-2024</b>	<b>2024-2025</b>	<b>2025-2026</b>	<b>2026-2027</b>	<b>2027-2028</b>
SA Co-Director 50% release (salary+fringe)	\$17,142	\$34,284	\$35,313	\$36,372	\$37,463	\$38,587
SA Co-Director leadership stipend+fringe	\$9,375	\$18,750	\$19,313	\$19,892	\$20,489	\$21,103
AA Co-Director 50% release (salary+fringe)	\$23,474	\$46,949	\$48,357	\$49,808	\$51,302	\$52,841
AA Co-Director leadership stipend+fringe	\$10,408	\$20,815	\$21,439	\$22,083	\$22,745	\$23,427
Administrative Assistant (50% salary+fringe)	\$12,500	\$25,000	\$25,750	\$26,523	\$27,318	\$28,138
Faculty/Staff Stipends for IGNITE Pathways in Spring Semester (\$1400 each)	\$0	\$14,000	\$16,800	\$19,600	\$22,400	\$25,200
FYS Instructors Summer Workshop Funding (\$500 each)	\$8,750	\$17,500	\$18,500	\$19,500	\$20,500	\$21,500
<b>Annual Costs</b>	<b>\$81,649</b>	<b>\$177,298</b>	<b>\$185,472</b>	<b>\$193,777</b>	<b>\$202,218</b>	<b>\$210,797</b>
<b>Marketing &amp; Outreach Initiatives</b>	<b>2022-2023</b>	<b>2023-2024</b>	<b>2024-2025</b>	<b>2025-2026</b>	<b>2026-2027</b>	<b>2027-2028</b>
Promotional Items	\$0	\$5,000	\$4,000	\$2,000	\$1,000	\$1,000
Printing & Digital Media Production	\$0	\$5,000	\$5,000	\$5,000	\$5,000	\$5,000
<b>Annual Costs</b>	<b>\$0</b>	<b>\$10,000</b>	<b>\$9,000</b>	<b>\$7,000</b>	<b>\$6,000</b>	<b>\$6,000</b>
<b>TOTAL ANNUAL COSTS</b>	<b>\$150,549</b>	<b>\$368,548</b>	<b>\$382,572</b>	<b>\$394,377</b>	<b>\$407,318</b>	<b>\$421,397</b>

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## Appendix A: Continuing Student Survey (CSS)

1. Are you currently enrolled in any of the following courses? If so, check all that apply. (LA 178, LANG 120, HUM 124, None of the above)
2. When thinking about your LA 178 course, please read the following statements and rate how much you agree or disagree (1=strongly agree, 2=agree, 3=disagree, 4=strongly disagree).
  - a. I made connections between this course and other courses.
  - b. I made connections between this course and my life outside the classroom.
  - c. Through coursework in this class I connected my experiences to the perspectives of students from different backgrounds (social, gender, political, etc.).
3. When thinking about your LANG 120 course, please read the following statements and rate how much you agree or disagree (1=strongly agree, 2=agree, 3=disagree, 4=strongly disagree).
  - a. I made connections between this course and other courses.
  - b. I made connections between this course and my life outside the classroom.
  - c. Through coursework in this class I connected my experiences to the perspectives of students from different backgrounds (social, gender, political, etc.).
4. When thinking about your HUM 124 course, please read the following statements and rate how much you agree or disagree (1=strongly agree, 2=agree, 3=disagree, 4=strongly disagree).
  - a. I made connections between this course and other courses.
  - b. I made connections between this course and my life outside the classroom.
  - c. Through coursework in this class I connected my experiences to the perspectives of students from different backgrounds (social, gender, political, etc.).
5. When thinking about this course, please read the following statements and rate how much you agree or disagree (1=strongly agree, 2=agree, 3=disagree, 4=strongly disagree).
  - a. I made connections between this course and other courses.
  - b. I made connections between this course and my life outside the classroom.
  - c. Through coursework in this class I connected my experiences to the perspectives of students from different backgrounds (social, gender, political, etc.).
6. Please rate yourself on each of the following traits as compared with the average person your age. We want the most accurate estimate of how you see yourself. Please use your perception of the average person your age (1=highest 10%, 2=above average, 3=average, 4=below average, 5=lowest 10%)
  - a. Academic ability
  - b. Drive to achieve
  - c. Emotional health
  - d. Leadership ability
  - e. Physical health
  - f. Self-confidence (intellectual)
  - g. Self-confidence (social)
  - h. Understanding of others

7. How often are each of the following statements true of you? (1=very often, 2=often, 3=somewhat often, 4=sometimes, 5=somewhat rarely, 6=rarely, 7=very rarely)
- a. I know what makes me angry
  - b. I know when I am upset
  - c. I know my strengths
  - d. I know what I like to do
  - e. I know what makes me afraid
  - f. I know what makes me cry
  - g. I know my weaknesses
  - h. I know what makes me laugh
  - i. I can tell the difference between anxiety and fear
  - j. I do not understand why I feel what I feel
  - k. I do not know what causes my moods to change
  - l. I mistake frustration for anger
8. Faculty-Student Relationships. In thinking about all of the professors you've had at UNC Asheville up to this point, please rate your agreement with the following statements(1=strongly agree, 2=agree, 3=disagree, 4=strongly disagree).
- a. My professors provided me with positive feedback or reinforcement.
  - b. My professors worked one-on-one with me when I needed it.
  - c. My professors were accessible outside the classroom (office hours, etc.).
  - d. My professors provided useful, timely and consistent feedback.
  - e. My professors were personable and approachable.
  - f. I talked to my professors about my career plans outside of class.
  - g. I talked to my professors about my academic interests outside of class.
  - h. I believe my learning was very important to my professors.
  - i. I believe most of my professors at this university are interested in my success here.
9. Academic Advising. For all of the questions in this section, if you have had more than one academic advisor please answer this question based on your most recent advisor. If you currently have more than one advisor please answer based on the advisor you work with most frequently. In thinking about your academic advisor at UNC Asheville, please rate your agreement with the following statements (1=strongly agree, 2=agree, 3=disagree, 4=strongly disagree).
- a. I had a good relationship with my academic advisor.
  - b. My academic advisor cared about me as a person.
  - c. My academic advisor helped me figure out my career and education goals.

10. Academic Advising, cont.
- How frequently did you meet with your academic advisor during the most recent semester?  
(1 time, 2 times, 3 times, 4 times, 5 or more times)
  - How frequently did you interact with your academic advisor during the most recent semester?  
(Please include communications such as: email, text message, phone calls, in-person meetings, virtual meetings, etc.) (1 time, 2 times, 3 times, 4 times, 5 or more times)
  - Please rate your agreement with the following statements(1=strongly agree, 2=agree, 3=disagree, 4=strongly disagree):
    - My academic advisor is the person who has my RAN number.
    - My academic advisor is someone who helps me decide which classes to take.
    - My academic advisor is someone who is interested in my development as a student and wants me to be successful at UNC Asheville.
    - My academic advisor is someone who I can go to with any question about the university.
  - If you have (or had) an advisor who is a professor, have you taken any courses taught by your advisor(s) while at UNC Asheville? (yes, no, my academic advisor did not teach classes)
  - Have you taken the Spark Seminar course (LA 172)? (yes, no - I've never heard of it, no - I knew about it but was not interested, no - I wanted to take it but couldn't for some reason)
11. Career Center. Based on your experiences at UNC Asheville up to this point (with faculty, staff, Career Center, etc.), please rate your agreement with the following statements (1=strongly agree, 2=agree, 3=disagree, 4=strongly disagree):
- I know what I want to major in.
  - I know what I want to do when I graduate.
  - I wish I have received more help figuring out what I want to do when I leave UNC Asheville.
  - I wish I have received more help understanding what I could do with my degree.
12. Sense of Belonging. Please rate your agreement with the following statements(1=strongly agree, 2=agree, 3=disagree, 4=strongly disagree).
- I have at least one close friend at UNC Asheville with whom I can talk about important things.
  - I have at least one faculty or staff member with whom I can talk about important things.
  - I feel like I belong at UNC Asheville.
  - I think of myself as a member of the campus community.
  - I feel integrated, socially, into campus life.
  - I feel like I matter at UNC Asheville.
13. Demographics. We are closing this survey with several demographic questions that will help us ensure we are serving all communities equally. We know your answers to this question do not define you and if there are any you would rather not answer simply choose "prefer not to answer."
- What is your gender identity? (man, woman, trans man, trans woman, gender queer/gender non-conforming, non-binary, prefer not to answer, different identity)
  - What is your sexual orientation? (heterosexual/straight, gay, lesbian, bisexual, queer, pansexual, asexual, prefer not to answer, not listed above)
  - Are you: White/Caucasian, African American/Black American, Indian/Alaska Native, East Asian (e.g. Chinese, Japanese, Korean, Taiwanese), Filipino, Southeast Asian (e.g. Cambodian, Vietnamese, Hmong), Other Asian, Native Hawaiian/Pacific Islander, Mexican American/Chicano, Puerto Rican, Other Latino, Prefer not to answer, Other

## **Appendix B: CIRP Freshmen Survey (TFS) Executive Summary**

[Link to TFS](#)

## **Appendix C: Focus Group**

Nine focus groups were facilitated in April 2022. Six focus groups were held for faculty & staff, which had an average attendance of 15 persons each. And three focus groups were held for current students, which had an average attendance of 5. Focus groups included both in-person and zoom options. In addition, a survey of all May 2022 graduates was conducted with 200 responses. In total, input was received from 90 faculty & staff, 25 current students, and 200 recent graduates.

Focus groups were conducted by posing the following general questions one question at a time and listening to a natural informal discussion of participants before posing another question. Members of the QEP Committee recorded notes of all discussion responses which were analyzed for predominant themes.

1. (Students, Recent Graduates) How would you define student success in the first year?
2. (Students, Faculty & Staff, Recent Graduates) What skills, knowledge, or qualities should a student develop during their first year?
3. (Students, Faculty & Staff, Recent Graduates) If you could suggest the one or two most important things the University could do to improve the experience for a new student here, what would you recommend?
4. (Faculty & Staff) In your area of expertise, how can you support this learning? (fac/staff)
5. Any other comments?

## **Appendix D: Hello Insight Pre Survey**

[Link to Hello Insight Pre Survey.](#)

## **Appendix E: Hello Insight Post Survey**

[Link to Hello Insight Post Survey.](#)